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INTERNATIONAL BRANCH

PROPOSAL FOR FRENCH LANGUAGE DAY CAMP  
SUMMER 1968

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INTERNATIONAL Y.M.C.A.  
PROPOSAL FOR FRENCH LANGUAGE DAY CAMP SUMMER 1968

I. Reasons for the Program

In the summer of 1967, the International YMCA conducted an experimental project to help New Canadian children learn French. We are concerned with this problem for four reasons:

1. It is obvious that the necessity to learn French creates many problems for the New Canadian child. Oriented to the North American society, he has struggled to become conversant in the English language while at the same time developing his ability in the native language of his parents. The latter is essential in maintaining the primary family group.

Through the efforts of the school, and because English is the language of his school mates and of the cultural milieu he wishes to identify with, the immigrant child reaches an acceptable level in a second language.

However, if he wishes to succeed within the educational system he is forced to learn a third language. To many who are already endeavouring to deal with two languages this becomes an odious task. That failure or promotion within the school system often hinges on his ability in the third language creates frustrations and fears that were not present in his eagerness to become part of the much-awed North American society.

This summer French program is seen as a means of introducing the child to the French language through the use of an environment which is, as closely as possible, similar to that in which the learning of English had seemed so worthwhile and exciting. By introducing the child to French in a social context, it is hoped that he will gain similar stimulation and motivation as had been provided by the challenge to become part of English-speaking North America.

2. The Montreal Y.M.C.A. is concerned with the development of the potential of people. It seems obvious that if one is to play a full and understanding role in this province it is impossible to remain ignorant of the feelings, aspirations and culture of the majority.

Recently much has been made of the danger of the French Canadian cutting himself off from the rest of North America. The same dangers are present when the English speaking Quebecer, and especially the immigrant, is unable to identify with or understand the language of the majority within his province.

Through this summer program it is hoped that a start will be made on bridging the gap that presently exists between English and French-speaking citizens. Not only will the child become more conversant in French, but he will also be introduced to the real Montreal and the French-Canadian culture, to which proficiency in its language is the key.

3. The community of which the International Y.M.C.A. is part has the largest immigrant population in the city. A great concern of ours is the development of sub-groups which become increasingly isolated from the main-stream of this cosmopolitan metropolis.

It would not be inaccurate to describe this region as a series of villages between whom there is a minimum of communication. Frequently the life led by the New Canadian is built around the culture and social system of the village, with the most superficial aspects of the modern metropolis serving to create an illusion of progress and improvement.

The Y.M.C.A. is not primarily concerned with the cultures these people choose. However, we are concerned with the conflicts and despairs that are the result of fears and pressures founded on ignorance. It is the withdrawing into the close ethnic group and the inability to break away from it that is the cause of the failure to become more truly a part of our society.

By introducing the New Canadian children to aspects of the metropolis of which they are largely ignorant, this program hopes to enable them to gain a greater understanding and feeling for the society in which they live.

4. This program is an attempt to demonstrate to the participants (and educators) that learning can be exciting, and need not be drudgery and imposition. By providing an environment which offers stimulation and is free from outside threats true learning and insights are possible.

The task of the educator in such a method is not to introduce and enforce facts but to develop a climate of trust and care for the individual. The attitude of the leader should not be that of a condescending authority, but of an



equal whose greater experience and knowledge of resources is at all times available. The educator's role should be one which is not a challenge to the individuality of the student. He may suggest but cannot enforce. He can be challenged and corrected.

If the leadership provided is autocratic then questioning will be seen as a challenge to authority. However, if the educator has been able to develop an acceptance of himself by the group then it can only be viewed as part of the democratic process.

By encouraging participation and by providing a challenging experience this program hopes to demonstrate to all concerned that there are alternative methods of learning.

In summary then, the YMCA embarks on the summer program:

1. To try to help the children in the area overcome difficulties in learning a third language in the school system.
2. To try to begin to help English and French-speaking citizens understand each other.
3. To begin to introduce New Canadians to the culture of the majority of the province of which they have been unaware.
4. To demonstrate an alternative learning method.

## II. The 1967 Experiment and Results

The program was run last year on an experimental basis with only 30 children taking part. The specific goals were defined as:

1. Improved French
2. An introduction to wider horizons
3. Providing each child with a worthwhile and exciting summer experience.
4. Personal development.

Following is the evaluation of last year's program in the light of these goals.

1. Improved French. The statistics on page 6 leave no doubt as to whether the program was a means of improving each child's ability in oral French. The method has not produced miracles, but its success is not limited to that statistically indicated.

A significant remark was made by one of the group. "I have not learned many new words but when someone speaks to me, I understand them. It makes sense."

Perhaps even more significant was the remark, "It was not really learning at all, even when the leaders made you speak French, it was fun." I believe this statement is the key to the whole process. The program broke down the view that French is an imposition, as the memorizing of verbs and rules. Instead, French became the password to an exciting experience; it fitted into a social context.

This aspect of the program more than any other requires further development. Although forewarned that the children would be testing them in the first few days, the group leaders made the mistake of frequently conversing in English. Once this was established they had a continual battle to enforce the "French only" rule.

Towards the end of the program, short intensive vocabulary sessions were introduced. These were extremely informal and concentrated on words of value within the context of the program. This was found to be successful as it enabled the child to express himself in a more fluid style.

A further experiment was inviting the French Canadian children in the branch to sit in on the movies and to take part in the Penny Fair. This was also successful and particularly in the later event produced a program that was exciting to all who witnessed it.

There can be no doubt that the program did much to bring about a change in the attitude towards the learning and the use of the French language. With this year's experience and with the innovations tested during the program even more significant results can be produced in 1968.

2. An Introduction to Wider Horizons. For most of the group members, the fact that they were sharing their summer with people outside the ethnic community was a new and challenging experience. By participating in activities with other children, notably French Canadian, group members were exposed to one of the most valuable features of this bilingual and cosmopolitan city.

The group was not restricted in its movements. Visits were made to Radio Canada, the Dow Planetarium, Outremount Parks, and the outdoor swimming pool at Kent Park. The Kent Park visit was an all-day affair, each child taking a picnic lunch. National Film Board movies and slides were shown and served to introduce further aspects of this city and country. All these activities were conducted in French.

Through this exposure, the group did experience some aspects of life outside the ethnic community. However, much more could have been achieved. Exciting ideas were presented but were not always developed any further. In part, this was due to limited financial resources and time restrictions.

In the final analysis it can be said that for 3 or 4 hours a day, each child moved away from the restriction of the ethnic community and made contact with other aspects of the society in which he lives.

3. Providing each Child With a Worthwhile and Exciting Summer Experience.

This program was structured to function between 1 and 4 pm. That it was successful can be most clearly seen by the pattern of attendance. Throughout the five weeks of the program it was notable that each participant did not see any restriction to his being at the Y. Each day members of the group would begin arriving as early as 10 am. and it became a regular feature for many to have lunch in the building. In similar fashion, four o'clock was not the signal for the group to disband and members would be in the Y till five or five-thirty. The eagerness to participate was also reflected in the high rate of regular attendance.

The above features and the interest and enthusiasm shared by all the participants would certainly indicate that the program was providing a meaningful summer for all concerned. For the majority this was their first experience in any type of organized summer program and the excitement and energy demonstrated left no doubt of each child's re-action to it.

4. Personal Development.

"They have developed real group feelings and do things as a group now." This quote from one of the group leaders adequately indicates the position the group reached.

Participation in a democratic group was a new experience for all. The results of such an experience were in some instances outstanding. The most dramatic development was shown by a small Chinese girl. At school this girl



had been extremely timid and insecure; rather than mix and play with her classmates, she preferred the company of her teacher. An indication of the social progress she made is the fact that by the final weeks of the program, the child was taking a full part in all physical activities, was contributing to the group's newspaper and had accepted responsibility for washing any utensils used. As the program progressed, a feeling of being part of a group was most noticeable; however, individuality was not lost. On the contrary each personality seemed to gain confidence and become more positive. Over a relatively short period of time, it was gratifying to observe the manner in which the freedom allowed was accepted in a responsible manner. Discipline problems were almost non-existent in this program.

Testing- An oral test consisting of 50 questions was prepared by one of the Protestant School Board's French specialists. Records were kept of the number of questions the children could comprehend and respond to.

The children were tested at the beginning of the program and again at the conclusion.

Results of the question and response test were:

July	mean score	26.7	August	mean	34.4
July	median score	27.0	August	median	35.0

Thus an increase of 7.7 in the mean score and an increase of 8.0 in the median score indicates a significant increase in the children's ability to comprehend French questions and respond to them.

### III. Recommendations for 1968

Following the evaluation of the 1967 program, the following recommendations were made (in August 1967) for the summer of 1968.

1. It is recommended that - French camp be a part of our program next summer and that it be expanded so that we can deal with approximately 200 participants.
2. It is recommended that further research and thought be given to the development of this method of learning and that some funds be made available now for the preparation of necessary equipment and aids.
3. It is recommended that next year's program run for 6 weeks, 5 or 6 hours a day.



4. It is recommended that a thorough training program be designed for next year's leaders.
5. It is recommended that the possibilities for the use of an outdoor area within walking distance of the Y be investigated.
6. It is recommended that all possible areas of financial support be thoroughly investigated.

We propose to conduct the program this year in line with the recommendations. The strength of last year's program (notably the use of the small group which plans and runs its own program and the employment of competent French Canadian advisors) will be retained. The carrying out of these recommendations will enlarge and strengthen the program.

It is hoped that this year the program can be made available to 200 children. For this hope to become a reality, funds must be found to subsidize the program. Otherwise, the cost to the participants would be far more than their ability to pay.

Based on two periods of three weeks each, each period serving 100 children, the following budget has been drawn up. Three scales of fees have been used, and produce three different subsidies required.

The need is urgent, and plans have been made. The counsellors are recruited, and a start has been made on curriculum. All we require to do the work is financial support.

Appendix - Proposed Budget

Income (based on three fee scales per three-week period)

1st period	A	B	C	A	B	C
100 children @	5.00	7.50	10.00	500.	750.	1000.
2nd period @	5.00	7.50	10.00	500.	750.	1000.
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Total Income				1000.	1500.	2000.

Expenses

Director	3 months 1/5 time and 6 weeks full time	1040.
Counsellors	10 @ 350. for 7 weeks including one week training.	3500.
Materials		400.
Miscellaneous		<hr/> 200.
Total Expenses		5140.
Subsidy required	(a) with \$ 5.00 fee	\$ 4140.
	(b) with \$ 7.50 fee	\$ 3640.
	(c) with \$10.00 fee	\$ 3140.